

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHCL #0255/01 3481920
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 141920Z DEC 07
FM AMCONSUL CASABLANCA
TO RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7927
INFO RUEHAAA/NSC WASHDC
RUCPDOG/USDOC WASHDC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASH DC
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT 8176
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS 2076
RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS 2956
RUEHMK/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT 2311
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 3767
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 0304
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0619
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0335
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 0973
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0646

UNCLAS CASABLANCA 000255

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

LABOR FOR DOL/ILAB TINA MCCARTER

STATE ALSO FOR DRL/IL TU DANG, DRL/NESCA, NEA/RA, NEA/MAG, NEA/ENA,
G/IWI, AND G/TIP

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ELAB](#) [EIND](#) [ETRD](#) [EAID](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [KWMN](#) [MO](#)

SUBJECT: 2007 MOROCCO UPDATE OF THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR -
CORRECTED COPY

REF: STATE 158223

SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION

11. Summary: This message provides requested updates for the Department of Labor's annual report on the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Morocco's commitment to combat and eliminate them. It updates information provided by Post in 2006 and years prior, concerning Morocco's child labor laws and regulations, law enforcement efforts, information on violations and prosecutions, governmental, and non-governmental programs, and policies to eradicate child labor.

12. The Government of Morocco (GOM) recognizes that there is an ongoing problem with child labor in the country and has made significant progress towards eradication of the problem. In recent years, Morocco has strengthened several legal codes aimed at ending the exploitation of children. In 2004, the Government passed reforms to the Family Code, the Labor Code, and the Penal Code, all of which strengthened children's rights. These laws are detailed in Post's 2004 and 2005 reports. In addition, the GOM adjusted the ages for compulsory schooling from 7-13 to 6-15 in 2000.

13. Last year we reported that NGOs were taking the lead in the fight against the growing problem of child sex tourism. This year, however, the GOM appears to be acknowledging the problem and working towards a plan of action to fight the phenomenon. They have also begun training health care professionals to deal with the issue. In addition, in November, Morocco hosted the Annual General Assembly of INTERPOL. At the meeting, INTERPOL adopted the decision to make pedophilia and trafficking in persons priorities in the coming year. The move was seconded by Morocco which has also pledged to make the issue a priority. END SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION.

MOROCCO CONFORMS LEGALLY BUT.....

¶4. In recent years Morocco has amended more than 240 articles of legislation to enhance the rights of children. These amendments were subsequently adopted by the Government and passed into law by Parliament to conform with international obligations as a signatory of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Children. However, the country continues to suffer from a high rate of child labor due to lack of enforcement of these laws.

¶5. Child labor in general is prohibited in Morocco's labor code. However, domestic labor of adults and children remains unregulated. While a bill regulating domestic labor was proposed over a year ago, the Minister of Social Development, Families and Solidarity recently announced additions to the proposed bill specifically addressing the problem of child domestics. The new proposal would formally forbid the hiring of girls under age 15 as domestic workers. Moreover, for the first time it would punish those who recruit the young girls for domestic labor. The adoption of the bill appears to be stalled over a section that would allow labor inspectors to enter private homes, something they are reluctant to do.

...HAS DIFFICULTY WITH ENFORCEMENT

¶6. Application of minimum age of employment law continues to be flouted in both the formal and informal sectors. According to Ministry of Justice (MOJ) officials, no Moroccan employer has ever been convicted of employing a child under the age of 15 despite the acknowledgement that there is a child labor problem in the country. Since 2005 several employers have been convicted of abuse of child domestics but not prosecuted for their illegal employment.

Morocco's informal sector, where the majority of children work, is not monitored by the Ministry of Labor's small cadre of labor inspectors. Currently, there are no labor inspectors dedicated solely to child labor issues. The Ministry of Labor, however, is developing a plan to employ labor inspectors exclusively dedicated to the domestic labor market.

GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO ERADICATE CHILD LABOR

¶7. The GOM continues to make the elimination of child labor a national priority. In January 2007 Morocco launched the first phase of the National Plan of Action for Children. Phase one, the awareness campaign, lasted from January 22 to February 23 and used print media, radio and television to disseminate information about the dangers of child labor.

¶8. Phase two, completed in March 2007, encompassed the signing of five conventions or compacts between the Ministry of Social Development, Families and Solidarity and various partners in preparation of the implementation of phase three of the plan.

-- The first compact, with the King's National Initiative for Human Development (INDH), will integrate the INDH goal of attacking poverty in Morocco with the elimination of child domestics by providing assistance and education to families who find it necessary to allow daughters to work as domestics in order to supplement the family income.

-- The Secretariat of State for Literacy and Non-Formal Education agreed, in compact two, to continue the awareness campaign begun in early 2007, educating Moroccans on the dangers of employing or working as a child domestic. In addition, the Secretariat pledged to increase non-formal education programs targeted at former child maids with the goal of reintegrating them into the formal education system.

-- The third compact, concluded with the National Observatory for the Rights of Children (ONDE), will mobilize different partners, governmental and non-governmental, to conduct programs warning against the employment of child maids. The ONDE will also continue to work on programs to assist child victims of abuse through legal and financial support, call centers, and programs for the protection of child maids.

-- Twenty million dirham (USD 2.6 million) was committed for further implementation of the Plan of Action by the Moroccan Agency

for Social Development in the fourth compact. This money will be used to develop the capacities of families to help them create income generating projects to supplement a meager income instead of placing their children in the labor market.

-- The final compact was signed with Zakoura Foundation, Morocco's largest micro-credit NGO. The Foundation agreed to prioritize loans for families who allow their children to be withdrawn from the labor market and reintegrated into the educational system on a permanent basis.

¶9. The third and final phase of the Plan, which will continue until 2015, has initiated the process of implementing the agreements noted above. The project is underway in Greater Casablanca, concentrating in the regions of Doukkala-Abda and Chaouia-Ouerdigha, Marrakech focusing on the regions of Tansift-El Haouz, Rabat targeting the regions of Rabat-Sale and Zemmour-Zaer, Fez and Fez-Boulemane, Taza, Taounate and Errachidia, all areas known to be struggling with high percentages of the worst forms of child labor.

¶10. The GOM currently recognizes that the phenomenon of child sexual exploitation in Morocco in the form of child sex tourism is on the rise, partly as a consequence of the rapid expansion of the number of general tourists. No statistics are available at this time. Recently, however, post learned of a planned study to access the overall problem of trafficking in Morocco. The study, to be sponsored by International Organization for Migration, UNHCR, UNICEF, and UNIFEM will be conducted by UNDP. The study is

scheduled to begin in January 2008 with results to be reported by UNICEF in early summer. The problems of sex tourism and children trafficked for labor in Morocco will be covered in the study. To address this growing problem, the GOM is in the planning stages of a new National Strategy for the Prevention of the Sexual Exploitation of Children. The GOM, through the ONDE, conducted workshops in Marrakech with regional health care professionals on the treatment of child victims of physical and sexual abuse.

THE EXPENSE OF FREE EDUCATION

¶11. While Moroccan law calls for free mandatory education for children ages 6-15, according to national statistics only 86 percent of Morocco's children reach the fifth grade and approximately only 20 percent graduate from high school. The situation is worse in rural areas where girls' attendance can be as low as 20 percent. Access to education for children in urban areas presents few obstacles; however, in rural areas the level of access is limited at best. Lack of adequate facilities beyond primary education in most rural communities often ensures that young girls will not attend secondary school. Parents are far less likely to send a female child away to boarding school or allow her to travel any distance away from home to attend classes, due to cultural and safety reasons. Moreover, the expense of sending a child away to school is often prohibitive for rural families. Given the choice between sending a female or male child to school most families opt for the male child. Education of a male child is often seen as an investment in the future whereas the education of the female child beyond primary school is frequently viewed as an unnecessary expense.

¶12. Another reason for low attendance in rural areas is an absence of teachers. There is a great deal of anecdotal evidence that teachers in rural areas are absent a great many days a year. Teachers' absences are often due to the governmental system of appointing young teachers to rural areas far from the family home. The teachers frequently travel home for weeks at a time while the absences are overlooked due to lack of sufficient oversight in the rural areas.

¶13. In addition, economic issues prevent some Moroccan children, who are unable to afford the approximately 200 dirhams (25 USD) for books and supplies, from attending class. An added factor may be that according to a recent UNICEF study, 87 percent of all Moroccan school children report that they are subject to some kind of violence in school.

¶14. Accurate data on child labor in Morocco is unavailable. On November 20, the new Minister of Social Development, Families and Solidarity, Nouzha Skalli, announced that the total number of children in the labor force was approximately 177,000. This estimate cuts the number quoted by other ministries, government and non-government entities in recent years by more than 400,000. The number formerly used in official and unofficial circumstances was 600,000 which was derived from a 2000 survey conducted jointly by the GOM, the International Organization for Migration, UNICEF and the World Bank. Many NGOs dealing with child labor issues believe the newly announced statistics significantly underestimate the problem.

¶15. These same NGOs estimate that tens of thousands of girls, some as young as five, still work as child domestics. Underage boys often work as low paid "apprentices" in garages or as laborers. Both boys and girls still work in the handicraft sector throughout the country and in Fez and Marrakech in particular. The number of

programs to rescue child laborers in Morocco, both governmental and non-governmental, continues to increase each year leading to consistently diminishing number of child laborers. The majority of child laborers work in the agricultural sector mainly on family farms.

TRAFFICKING AND SEX TOURISM

¶16. Children are trafficked domestically for labor. The highest rate of trafficking is for child domestics. Young girls are trafficked mainly from rural areas to work primarily in Rabat, Casablanca and Marrakech. Family, friends, or professional intermediaries match the girls with employers in larger cities. In most cases the intermediaries receive a placement fee in addition to a monthly percentage of the child's pay. The system is similar for boys working as apprentices. Young women are trafficked to large cities to work as prostitutes. Agadir is a known sex tourism destination with underage female prostitutes catering to a largely Arab/Gulf clientele. There are an increasing number of reports that young boys are being trafficked to large cities, Marrakech in particular, to serve as prostitutes as well. NGOs, such as "Don't Touch my Child," report that the level of child sex tourism in Morocco has increased dramatically in recent years.

COMMENT

¶17. There is little doubt that the GOM has attached priority to eradication of the worst forms of child labor, in principle. The country's laws adhere to international regulations on the elimination of child labor and the Plan of Action for Children demonstrates the GOM's political will to end the practice. Both government and privately funded sensitization campaigns over the past few years have been highly successful in initiating the turn of the cultural mindset against the practice of employing young children, especially child maids. We spoke with NGO leaders who claim there is now a sense of shame in some village families upon exposure as having sent their children to the city to work.

¶18. That said, without enforcement of the law the problem will continue to exist in force. Currently, there is neither a mechanism to identify domiciles that employ child domestics nor an official system to withdraw them. Overworked labor inspectors are not trained in identifying child laborers outside or inside the home. Intermediaries, though well known in villages by civil society and local officials, are never prosecuted as traffickers.

¶19. In order to ameliorate the situation the GOM should identify and train a cadre of labor inspectors dedicated to the enforcement of child labor law. USDOL should consider funding a program to assist the GOM in training such a cadre in an effort similar to DOL's recently completed social dialogue program to train labor inspectors in labor code regulations. In addition, police and local

officials need to address the problem of intermediaries/traffickers through identification and prosecution.

¶20. Local NGOs have been very active in fighting trafficking for child labor. The GOM should consider increased partnering with local NGOs or associations to identify and assist families who feel the need to send their children to work as domestics or apprentices, develop prevention plans relevant to the region, assist in the local reinsertion of rescued child laborers, and support local efforts to identify and prosecute local intermediaries. The USG should consider funding a program to identify and train representatives from local NGOs partnering with the GOM on how best to assist in these child rescue efforts. On the policy side, the Embassy will continue to engage on this issue with the Government and with parliament, particularly to advocate for the needed legislation

noted above.

¶21. Embassy Rabat has coordinated on this message.

GREENE